

Clarice was always an *strange* child. Whether it be that she bumped her head just one too many times, or that she was born one cog short, she was always a bit *batty*.



Like a bat, Clarice always woke up late. 13 minutes to be exact, as she believed 13 to be a magical number. Clarice would wish each of the eight planets good morning, before wishing Pluto an extra special morning. She didn't want Pluto to be left out. Perhaps what was even more *odd* was Clarice's big pet, Theodore! A big scaly Alligator with a toothy grin and lopsided tail. Today was a big day for them both, as it was their birthday. They would be going to the zoo, which made them all jittery and excited. They had been planning where they wanted to go for weeks, both determined to see what kinds of birds they had.



Clarice and Theodore would get ready together every morning for their *peculiar* routine. First, they would take a bath, and Clarice would scrub each of Theo's scales till they were shiny and clean.

Next, Theo and Clarice would explore their closet and find something to wear. Theo always refused to wear anything, but Clarice choose a crown for him today anyways.



Lastly, Theo and Clarice would raise their hands way way up high to the clouds and exclaim: "*un compass mantis!*" (A term told by her friend Oliver that it was a magical spell for luck.)

After their nutty routine, Clarice would hop over to the kitchen with Theo slithering behind her. Bending her legs, Clarice bounced up! onto the bar chair, greeting her mom with a giggle. Antoinette's face squirmed in a sundry glance, noticing Theo's snout puffing on top the countertop and licking his lips, before giving Clarice a plate full of green french toast, green butter, and green apple syrup, not to exclude Theo's green fish. It was their favorite meal.



Once finishing the last of their meal, Clarice and Theo went on a search for her father, sneaking around corners, before jumping out with a big

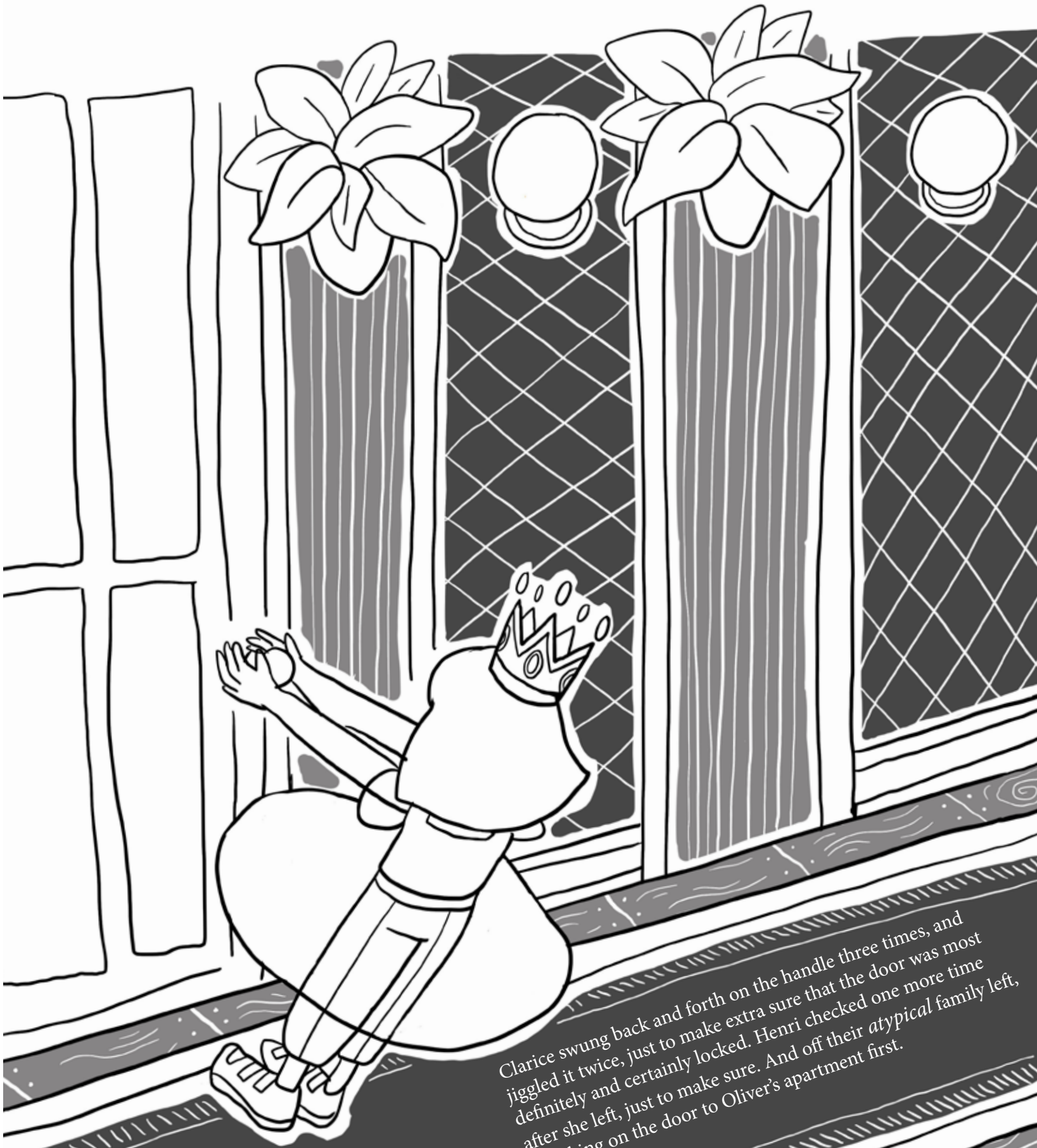
RAWR!



Henri grinned, and whispered in Clarice's ear:

"I thought there was something *bizarre* about the lamp having scales."

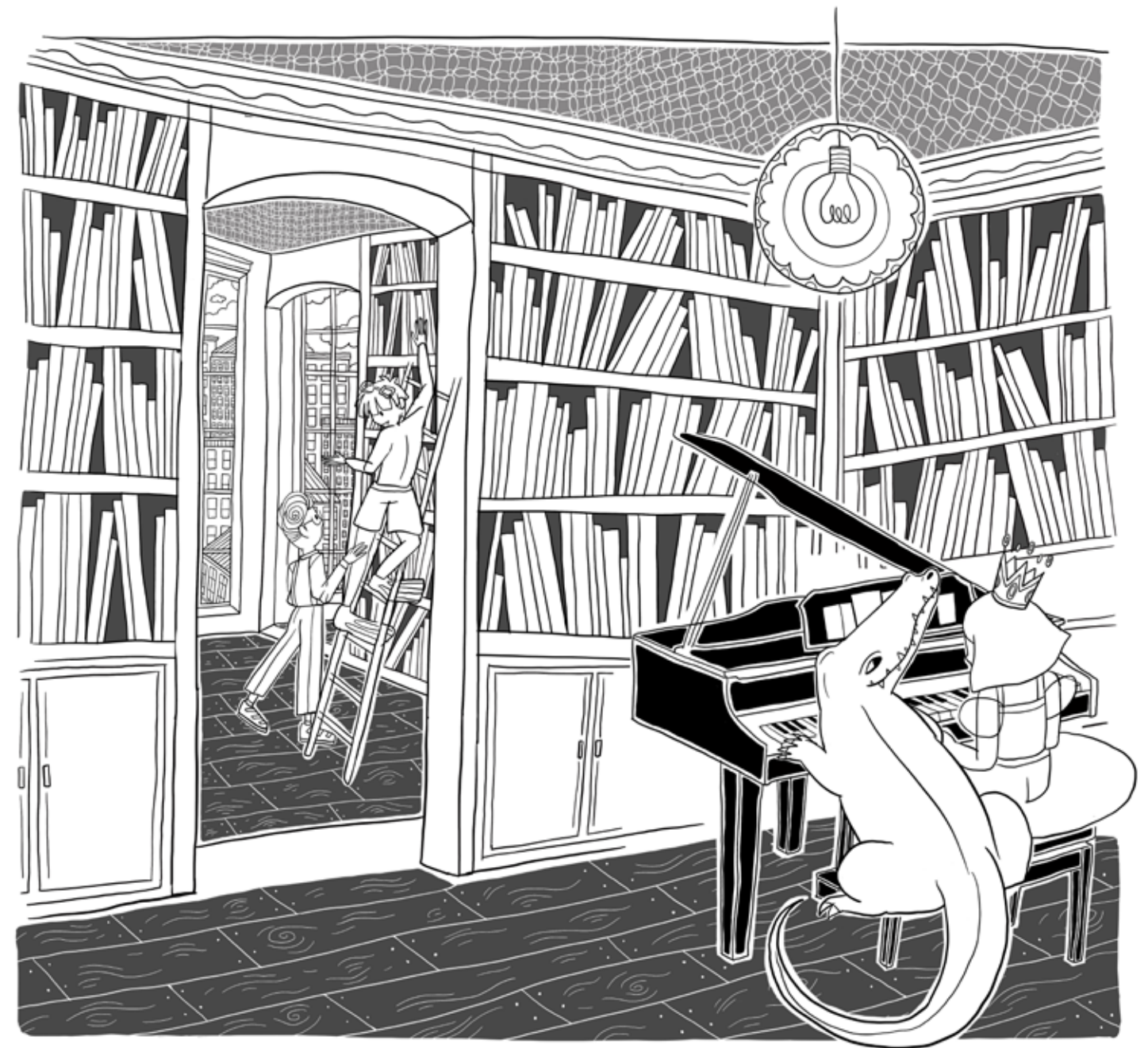
Closing the apartment door with a silent 'click,'



Clarice swung back and forth on the handle three times, and jiggled it twice, just to make extra sure that the door was most definitely and certainly locked. Henri checked one more time after she left, just to make sure. And off their *atypical* family left, knocking on the door to Oliver's apartment first.



Bob, Barbara, and Benjamin were a very 'normal' family, or at least they thought themselves to be, compared to everyone else. They had 'ordinary' clothes, 'average' jobs, and quite 'regular' smiles upon their faces, very different from the cooky smile and attire of Clarice's parents. Compared to her family, Benjamin's was very *ab-normal*. Benjamin's parents were both accountants, so they said a brief how'd-you-do and such, before Bob left and only closed the door once, as everything was calculated beforehand. Clarice would jiggle the handle at least twice to check though, when they weren't looking.



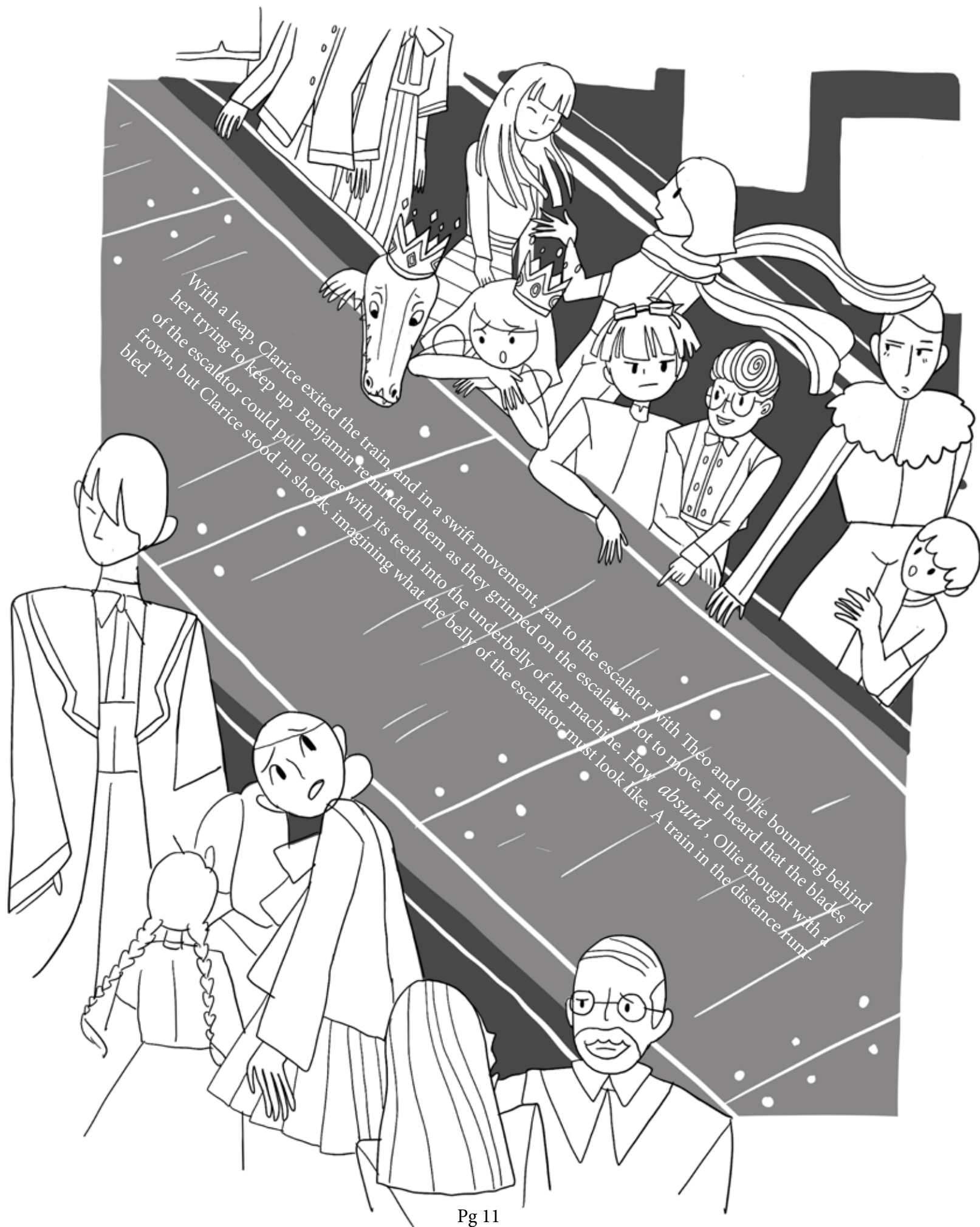
When Bob, Benjamin, and Clarice and her family walked to Ollie's door, they could hear instruments of all kinds bouncing down the hallways, echoing back and forth. As they knocked on the door, the hall would be at once be silent before Irma, Penelope and Ollie would bound out in colorful yellow and blue, smiling and humming each a different tune. Ollie was *goofy*, just like her, and was wearing a combination of a soccer uniform and a wetsuit. Ollie would jiggle the door handle four times before they left, believing four to be a lucky number. (Despite Irma telling him otherwise)



Each family sat on the train, with smiles on their faces, humming tunes, click-clacking numbers on their thing-a-ma-jigs, and chitter-chattering back and forth, unaware or perhaps, not caring of the stares of other passengers.

How *irregular* they thought.

“How *funny* and *out-of-line*” they concurred.



Once the group had reached the gates from it's long trek from the station, Clarice oogled at the *weird* animals dancing at the tip-top of the clock tower, strumming violins and tapping at their drums, hammering the two bells at the top.



First, Ollie ran over to the lemurs exhibit, pulling the group with him. As he pressed his face up against the glass, he looked over to Clarice and said: “Someday I’m going to be able to jump just like that!” Clarice looked at him with a *curious* look, “I thought you wanted to be able to dive just like a seal?”



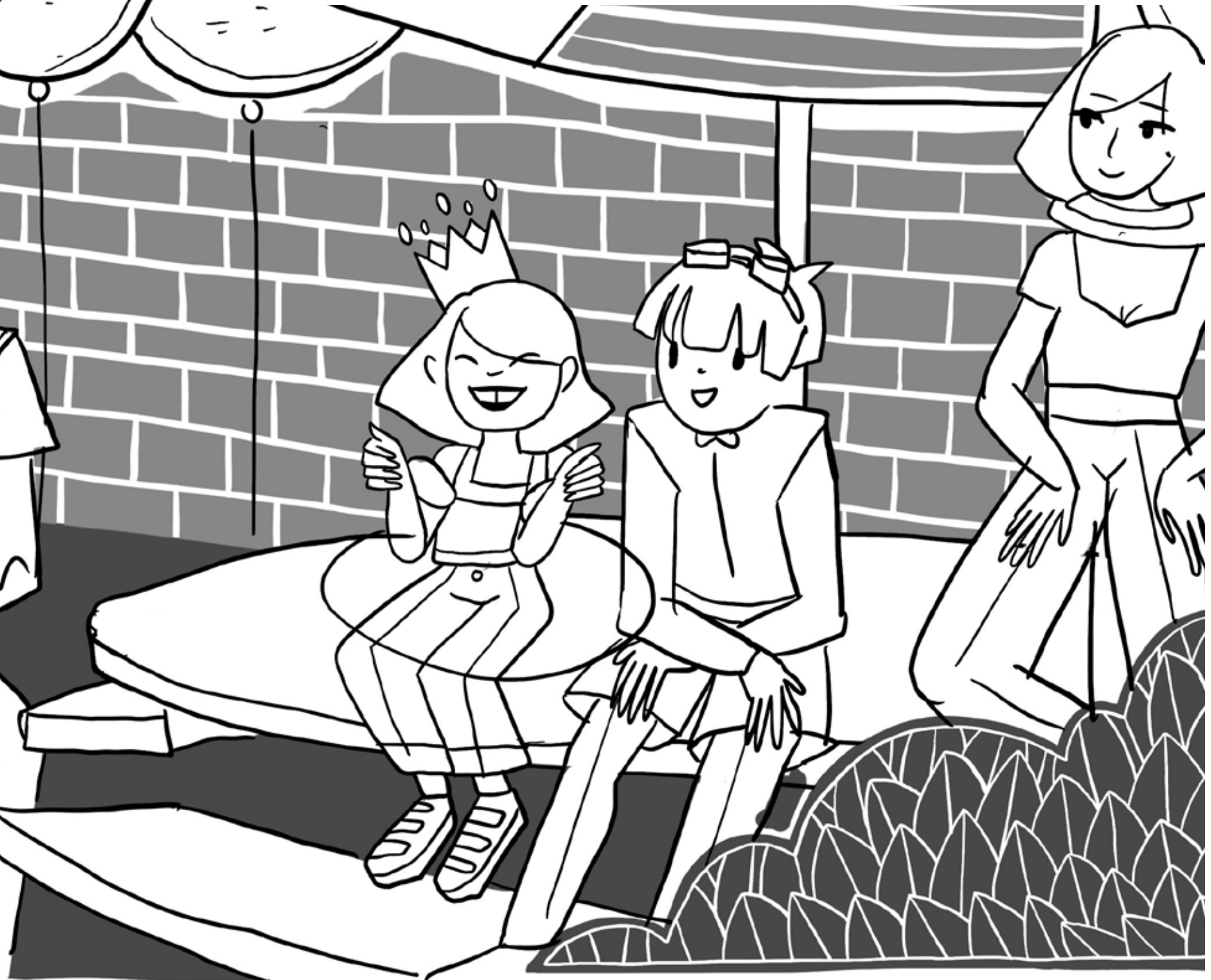
Next, Benjamin took the group to the polar bears exhibit. As they sat in front of the exhibit, Oliver talked about what was so interesting about polar bears. Clarice sat in thought about how you would be able to tell a normal polar bear apart from an albino one.



Clarice got to choose where to venture last, and thus they ran off to go see the birds with their colorful plummets. With one swift glance of Theo, they would squack and tweet in shock, fluttering about. Clarice and Ollie would giggle as a frustrated Oliver would fumble with the camera.



And with that, the group sat for lunch. Bob brought drinks, like plenty of dark black coffee. Irma brought the fruit, and sandwiches. Each one of the sandwiches had a different filling, one with bright pink and green fruit, one ham and cheese, and one *peculiar* one for Clarice with just peanut butter inside. With a song, Henri pulled out a giant green cake shaped like a giant fish with a hook in its mouth.

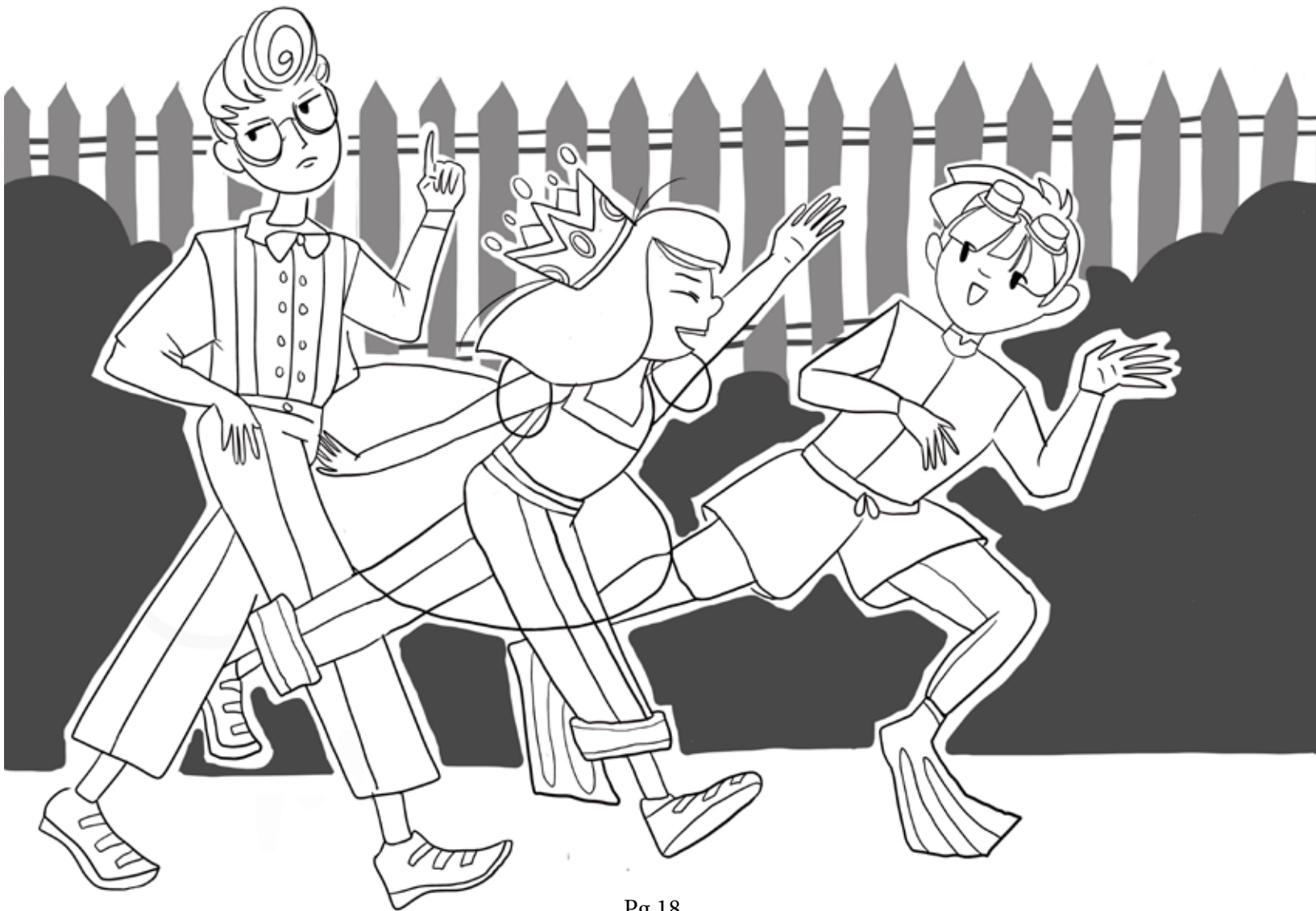


Clarice got to choose one more exhibit before they left, and with a *cheesy* grin, she skipped off with Ollie and Benjamin to the reptiles exhibit.



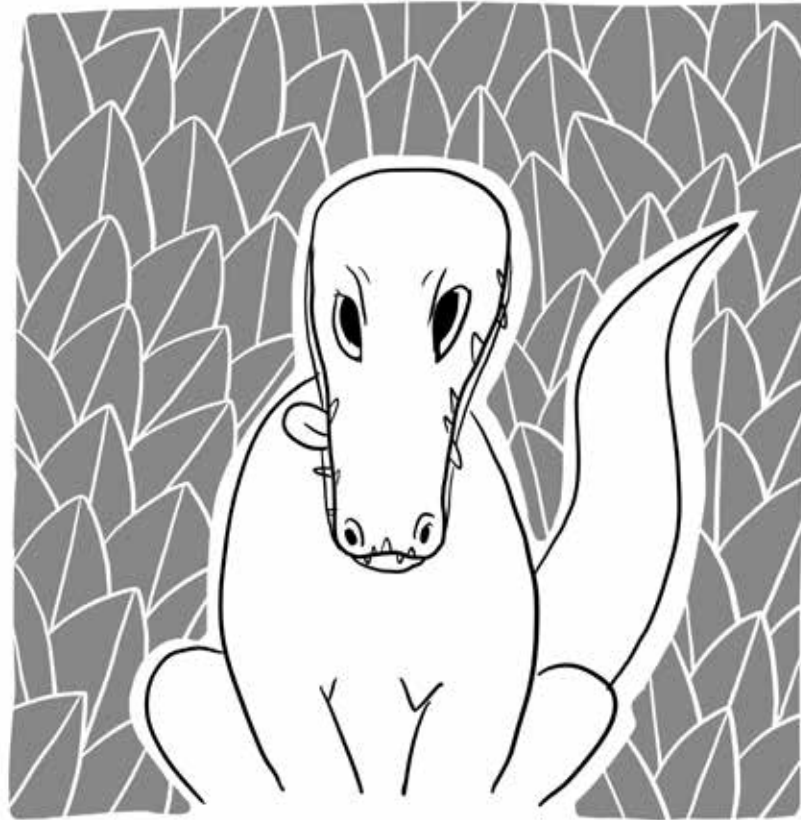
Unknown to her, his crown fell off on the dark floor, leaving Theo nameless in the dark. Clarice on the other hand, excited, ran off to see the big green snake. In her excitement, she left Theo in the dark, as he stay put, waiting for her to return.

Now, the reptiles exhibit was a rather dark room, with the main lights coming from the glass enclosures. Blue lights on the floors on the cooridors gave off an *unnatural* feeling, making Theo nervous. Which meant that Clarice could not see Theo staring at one of the exhibits, sitting in one place.



At the same moment,

a worker at the park was coming to the reptile exhibit to check on the animals, and to his surprise, found the *oddball* Theo. With a yelp, the worker jumped back, before realizing the alligator had not moved.



Cautiously, the man moved over to capture the gator, and place it where it should be.

When Clarice ran to the end of the enclosure and reached the center garden, she looked around for Theodore, who was not to be seen. In a panic, she shouted: “Theo! Theo?!”, but he did not come for her. Panicked, she looked to her friends, telling them that

she lost Theo.

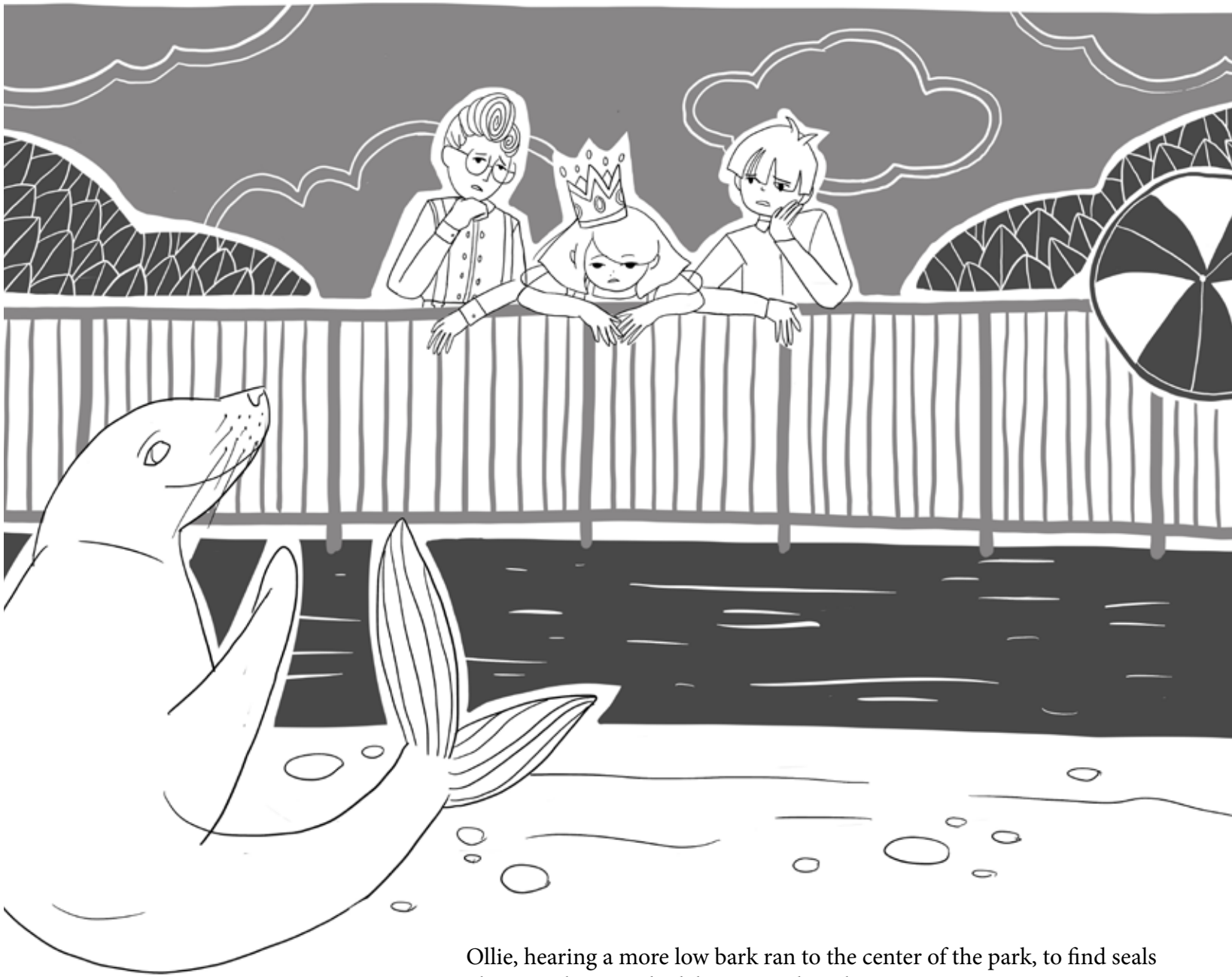




Clarice didn't know what to do, but Benjamin had a plan. They wouldn't have to tell her parents. Clarice smiled, just a little, as they ran around the park. They knew that he had a really *wacky* bark, so they ran around in search of him. First, they heard barks. Thinking the sounds to be Theo's, they ran over, only to find normal dogs instead.



Hearing more *kooky* barks in the distance, Clarice ran to find a bird mimicking a dog, Clarice spooked herself instead.



Ollie, hearing a more low bark ran to the center of the park, to find seals playing. Clarice sighed, becoming hopeless,

She knew that she needed to tell her parents.

Running to her mom, tears running down her face, mumbling the words she already knew.

I lost him. I lost him, mom.



Her face sat puzzled for one second, before hugging her tight.

It's okay. We'll talk about this later.

Everyone searched for Theo, before finding the area for caretakers and a new temporary exhibit filled with small trees and bushes. Several workers stood in front of the class with *unusual* electronic boxes to their ears. Now, whether it was from instinct, or good luck, or perhaps it was a pure coincidence, Clarice shouted Theo's name into the exhibit, faltering a bit.



And suddenly,

bounding from the bushes, a big alligator with a *zany* smile and *crooked* tail came towards the glass.



It was Theo! The workers, with a shocked glance looked towards Clarice and mumbled something. Antoinette, with a scary look on her face and hand towards the man got the man to release the gator.

Clarice ran up to Theo and gave him a big hug as he made low guttural sighs. “I’ll never leave you again.” She said, weeping.

“I love you Theo!”

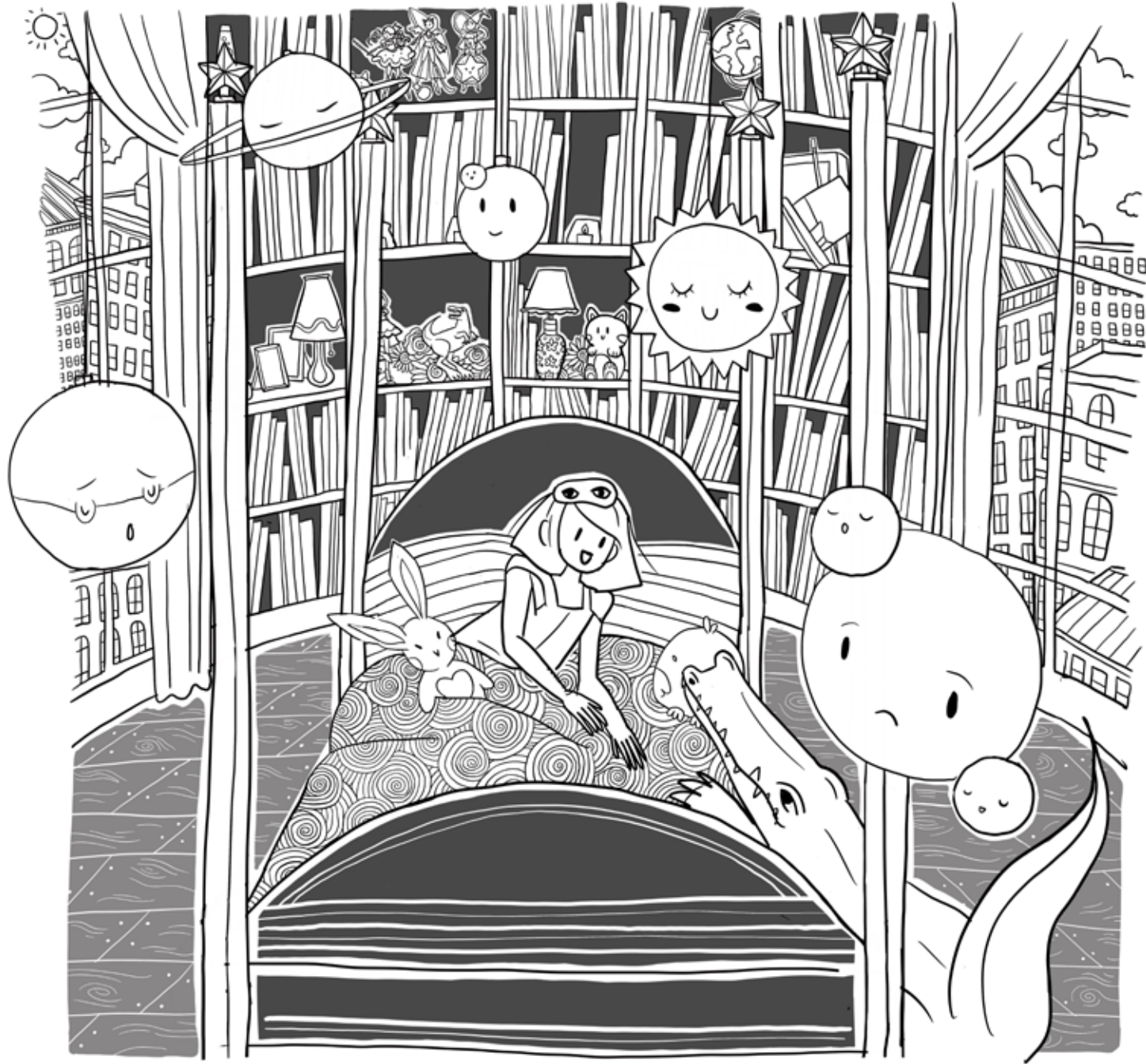




And so, all of the families left, after the zoo workers apologized many times Clarice's parents. It was a busy day, and Clarice could barely keep her eyes open.

Ollie yawned every couple of steps, and even Benjamin did not have the energy to tell Clarice *way out* facts he had learned as they got on the train. Each family was silent, except for the snoring of Theo, happy to be with his family once more.

With a swig of water, many many hugs, and a kiss on each cheek, Clarice and Theo headed off to bed, ready to have another adventure again tomorrow.



“We may be *different* Theo,” Clarice mumbled, “But that is what makes us great, right?” Theodore blinked his eyes in response, as they both drifted far far off asleep to have many dreams together.

Vocabulary List:

Look through all the words to describe something or someone *strange*. What other words do you think fit?

Pg 1/2	strange, odd, peculiar, un compass mantis (check real spelling)
Pg 3/4	nutty
Pg 5/6	bizarre, atypical
Pg 7/8	ab-normal, goofy
Pg 9/10	irregular, funny, out of line
Pg 11/12	absurd, weird
Pg 13/14	curious
Pg 15/16	pecuiliar
Pg 17/18	cheesy, unnatural
Pg 19/20	oddball
Pg 21/22	wacky, kooky
Pg 23/24	puzzled, unusual
Pg 25/26	zany, crooked
Pg 27/28	way out
Pg 29/30	different

Extra ‘Credit’ Words:

uncanny, baffling, eerie, bizarro, offbeat, quirky, alien



What words will you use on your next ‘strange’ adventure?